

Glossary of OPEB Terms

Accrual Accounting - A system of accounting in which revenues are recorded when earned and outlays are recorded when goods are received or services performed, even though the actual receipt of revenues and payment for goods or services may occur, in whole or in part, at a different time.ⁱ

Actuarial Value of Assets – The value of cash, investments, other assets and property belonging to an OPEB trust, pension fund or similar entity, as used by the actuary for the purpose of actuarial valuation. Some funds may be restricted for other purposes, and “smoothing” of investment gains and losses often make the actuarial value of assets different from the market value of assets.

Annual Required Contribution – Normal Cost plus an amortization of the funding shortfall over a period of no more than 30 years.

Cash Basis Accounting - A system of accounting in which revenues are recorded when actually received and outlays are recorded when payment is made.ⁱⁱ

Discount Rate – The interest rate used to calculate present value of a series of future cash flows. Under GASB 45, the rate should be “long term expected yield on the investments that are expected to be used to pay benefits as they come due. These would be plan investments for a funded plan, the employer’s investments for a pay as you go plan [e.g. short term county investment pool], or a weighted average of expected plan and employer investments for a plan that is partially funded”ⁱⁱⁱ

FASB – Financial Accounting Standards Board. “Since 1973, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) has been the designated organization in the private sector for establishing standards of financial accounting and reporting”^{iv}.

GASB - Government Accounting Standards Board. “The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) was organized in 1984 by the Financial Accounting Foundation (FAF) to establish standards of financial accounting and reporting for state and local governmental entities. Its standards guide the preparation of external financial reports of those entities.”^v

GFOA – Government Finance Officers Association. “GFOA is the professional association of state/provincial and local finance officers in the United States and Canada, and has served the public finance profession since 1906. Approximately 16,000 GFOA members are dedicated to the sound management of government financial resources.”

Implicit Subsidy – “The difference between a premium rate charged to retirees for a particular benefit and the estimated rate that would have been applicable to those retirees if that benefit was acquired for them as a separate group.”^{vi}

Irrevocable Contribution – “Irrevocably transferred assets to a qualifying trust, or equivalent arrangement, in which plan assets are dedicated to providing benefits to retirees and their beneficiaries in accordance with the terms of the plan and are legally protected from creditors of the employer(s) or plan administrator. The preceding criteria preclude counting as [irrevocable] contributions (a) designations of net assets of a governmental or proprietary fund to be used for OPEB or (b) internal transfers of assets to a separate governmental or proprietary fund for the same purpose. Rather, such actions should be regarded as earmarking of employer assets.”^{vii}

Level Dollar Amortization – Funding a shortfall in OPEB assets with equal dollar payments over a designated number of years (no more than 30 years). The present value of the level payments equals the present value of unfunded liabilities, the UAAL.

Level Percent of Payroll Amortization – Funding a shortfall in OPEB assets as a level percent of payroll over a designated number of years (no more than 30 years). The present value of the payments equals the present value of unfunded liabilities, the UAAL. Level percent of payroll typically has lower payments in the early years than level dollar amortization. When using level payroll amortization, employee count is assumed to be constant, and the payroll differences arise from overall wage trends.

Normal Cost - The actuarially determined present value contribution needed to fund benefits which are earned for employee service rendered during the current year. Normal cost depends on many factors, including the interest rate used to discount future cashflows, and expected inflation.

OPEB – Other Post Employment Benefits

OPEB Trust – An entity other than a pension or retirement system which manages OPEB assets. In many respects it is similar to a pension fund for OPEB. For reasons detailed in GASB 45, contributions to an OPEB trust should be irrevocable in order to obtain the most favorable accounting treatment.

Pay-as-you-go funding – Paying benefits (such as pensions or OPEB) on a cash basis, with no money set aside for future liabilities which are already incurred.

POB – Pension Obligation Bond. Generally yielding taxable interest, POBs are issued to help fund a previously unfunded or underfunded pension liability.

UAAL – Unfunded Accrued Actuarial Liability. Actuarial Accrued Liability minus the Actuarial Value of Assets.

ⁱ Source: Congressional Budget Office.

ⁱⁱ Source: Congressional Budget Office.

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: GASB 45 Statement Paragraph 120 (page 96).

^{iv} Source: www.fasb.org/facts/index.shtml

^v Source: www.gasb.org/facts/index.html

^{vi} Source: GASB 45 Statement Paragraph 96 (page 86).

^{vii} Source: GASB 45 Statement Paragraph 141 (page 105).